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INTELLIGENT VOTING IN 1954 — AND BEYOND

By HOWARD BUFFETT

THIS IS an election year. The candidates are already hard at the business of political love-making. Their wooing of the electorate includes many forms and techniques, according to the talents and ingenuity of the candidates.

The courtship aspect of recent elections has something in common with the standard melodrama of the Gay Nineties, in which the sophisticated city slicker was the villain and the innocent country girl was the victim. Sometimes the love-making by the villain was interrupted when the girl's father appeared unexpectedly with this challenge, "Young man, what are your intentions?"

The sobering truth embodied in this analogy cuts short its humorous implications. These candidates are indeed asking that the reins of government be placed in their hands and we have a right and a duty to know their "intentions." To earlier generations the major parties offered the voter a choice of policies and principles. If the voter was interested he could know what the candidate was offering, over and above his charm. That is all changed. The objective of all candidates is — to get into office. Beyond that we know little about them and their "intentions."

The Founding Fathers in their wisdom set up two all-important rights — the right of suffrage and the right to discuss with freedom the conduct of our ruling officials. These are two essential factors on which government by the people depends.

Yet there is another factor of overriding importance. It is the right of the people to decide by their ballot the basic policies that the government will follow. Lacking opportunity to vote for or against basic policies, the right of election is not worth possessing. Without a choice on policies, the business of casting ballots becomes a mockery and a fraud. The present situation in New Jersey, where both Democratic and Republican senatorial candidates are "liberal" is a crying instance. No wonder there are reports that an independent candidate is being considered.

Let me illustrate. A decisive factor in American life today is the policy of our government of intervening in the affairs of foreign governments. Regardless of their personal attitude on this policy, most people will agree on its importance to our national life. Former President Hoover expressed this general recognition at the 1952 Republican Convention in these words, "And if I seem to stress our foreign policies, I do so because within them lies the future freedom of men and women in America."

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Despite this vital importance, can anyone honestly contend that the American people have had a genuine voice in either the initiation of this foreign policy, or in its continuation? If so, when, where, and how?

In the 1940, 1944, 1948 and 1952 presidential elections neither the platforms nor the presidential candidates of the two parties took stands that gave us a real choice. Those who controlled the machinery of the two parties, in four straight elections, have deliberately eliminated any opportunity for the voters to approve or reject the existing foreign policy.

This reality is in sharp contrast with the situation portrayed in an official Army indoctrination bulletin dated February 23, 1951. This issue of *Armed Forces Talk* is entitled, "How Our Foreign Policy is Made." Perhaps the most naive paragraph in that text is as follows:

"One way in which citizens in general help to make foreign policy is through their votes in national elections. The people elect the President and the members of Congress. If the people don't like the policy followed by the President or by Congress (sic), or the foreign policy plank in the platform of a political party *they can make their opinions felt by electing officials who advocate another policy.*" (Italics mine)

The people can "elect officials who advocate another policy" only if there are on the ballot candidates who advocate another policy. But even if such candidates are on the ballot, they must surmount the elective strength of the party organizations. For the major parties are controlled by those who have decided that the people shall not have a choice.

OBVIOUSLY THE PEOPLE can only recover their right of choice by independent counteraction. The practical method is to go directly to the candidates with a vigorous questioning program. Candidates espousing alternative policies would then have a chance to be heard, their ideas discussed, and the people would again hear both sides.

Whether you approve or disapprove of existing national policies, the transcendent merit and fairness of such a constructive action should be apparent. If current policies are sound, genuine debate and discussion will increase their popular acceptance; if not, re-examination is the most constructive move possible.

And so we begin to realize the need of a drive for intelligent voting. But there are other virtues to this project. Most Americans sense that the right to vote in itself means nothing. The Russians also hold elections. And while we do have a choice of candidates, the lack of a choice of policies is beginning to make our elections too suggestive of the Russian kind.

Persuading the candidates to cooperate in the drive for intelligent voting will not necessarily be easy. Yet it is certainly feasible. Of course, some candidates will automatically resist intelligent inquiry on the part of the voters, especially those who

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expect to ride into office on a popular leader's coattails. Others will resent being smoked out publicly on controversial issues for differing reasons.

But the behavior of candidates will in itself constitute a yardstick of their trustworthiness. The candidates who want the election to remain a "popularity contest" in which their well-known names, the prominence of their families, or their personal connections presumably give them an advantage, may be considerably irked. Their formula of a smile and a good word for everybody, plus an uncompromising stand in favor of the Ten Commandments and against sin, would be revealed as pure humbuggery.

Nevertheless, despite some bellows of pain from distressed candidates, it can be expected that honorable candidates would welcome a campaign for intelligent voting. This change would encourage them to search their souls on the great issues of the day, realizing that they would win or lose on how they stood and not on their popularity rating.

More subtle and more difficult would be the opposition of those who are profiting by the deterioration of our elective processes. A well-informed vigilant citizenry represents a real threat to their power to control elections. The back room election managers who have been nominating Tweedledum on the Republican ticket and Tweedledee on the Democratic ticket, then shouting the popular refrain, "Vote as you please, but vote," would have their playhouse demolished.

Probably campaigns in the pattern of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates are outdated. But if my proposal were adopted, campaigns would develop public understanding of basic issues and policies. Popular opinion would become intelligent judgments hammered out by the vigorous presentation of contrasting viewpoints, instead of shallow opinions molded by self-serving columnists or commentators.

FORTUNATELY, A MOVEMENT for intelligent voting should not be hard to implement. All of us belong to luncheon clubs, lodges, churches, PTA's or other organizations which long ago decided to stay clear of partisan politics. Yet most of them have been active in "get out the vote" campaigns. This movement would be made to order for them. As organizations they are politically neutral, so that their position to formulate questions and present them to candidates would be entirely objective. Likewise, their community importance would enable them to publicize the resulting answers.

Such organizations would take no position on the issues themselves. As a type of moderator they would become instruments of education for intelligent voting — a distinctly nonpartisan patriotic service.

Formulating questions that encompass the vital issues is not too difficult. Moreover, the intellectual exercise brought about by the effort to construct such questions is constructive in itself. I have compiled six questions on foreign policy on which it would seem that every honorable candidate for the Senate should be willing and anxious to declare his position. I submit the following:

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(1) Will you vote for one of these alternatives: (a) to cut military spending to balance the budget, or (b) to increase taxes to achieve that goal?

(2) Will you support the Bricker proposal to prevent the chief executive from nullifying Constitutional law by treaties or agreements with foreign powers?

(3) Will you favor or oppose any legislation that would give over to the United Nations any power to control our government or our citizens?

(4) Will you favor or oppose the continuation of peacetime conscription when the present peacetime draft law expires in 1955?

(5) Will you introduce or, if already introduced, support legislation to renounce and terminate the Status of Forces Treaty (putting our soldiers in foreign lands under the jurisdiction of foreign courts)?

(6) Do you favor or oppose the current military policy of attempting to police and finance the non-Russian world by levies on American youth and American wealth?

PROBABLY THE FOREGOING questions can be better phrased, but certainly they embody issues on which responsible and intelligent citizens have the right to know the beliefs of candidates before election day. Upon the handling of these issues depend the lives, material welfare and future happiness of the American people. Of course, these few do not make up the full list of problems on which candidates should show their colors, but they indicate the possibilities.

You can expect that some candidates will slyly try to evade any commitment on such questions. Their response will give you a measure of their fitness for office. It can be taken for granted that the office-seeker who ducks issues before he is elected will follow the same pattern of behavior afterwards. The time to get his number is before he is elected.

These warning words are not sounded in disparagement of candidates. Most candidates are following the advice of old hands at the game, and years of indifference by voters have richly rewarded the office-seeker who was strong on back-slapping and slippery on issues. It is our responsibility as citizens to cure this situation. It can only be done by forcing candidates to take a stand on issues.

"If America is to be run by the people, it is the people who must think." Government by the people surely means that the people, not the politicians, must call the tune. Intelligent voting is certainly prerequisite of a vigilant citizenry. Elections lacking this basic virtue are evidence of political decay. The final price of such indifference is liberty itself, and the telltale signs are all around us.

Mr. Buffett served four terms in Congress, as Republican Representative for the 2nd Congressional District of Nebraska. He retired in 1952 and returned to private business. In the last Presidential nominating campaign, Mr. Buffett was active on the Taft committee.

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HUMAN EVENTS

FRANK C. HANIGHEN, *Editor* FRANK CHODOROV, *Associate Editor*

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Realignment: Two developments appear on the political horizon: (1) there are signs of decreasing popularity of Eisenhower; (2) strains on the antiquated party system produce moves toward its realignment.

One phenomenon strikes observers with some force — the rather recent coolness of the Hearst press toward the President and his Administration. It is true, this newspaper chain has little effect on the rural areas, but it carries influence in the big cities: it does know what the people in the latter are saying and it pretty well mirrors their reactions. Hence the significance not only of this developing attitude, but also of the posture of Mr. Hearst himself.

For the first year of the Ike regime, Bill Hearst missed few superlatives in writing (in his famous Sunday column) about Ike and his team. But in the past two months, he has discarded this honeymoon sentiment. Those who watch the strategy of the American press gaped at his column of May 2 in which Hearst ridiculed recent speeches of the President and set down some very blunt truths. One paragraph stands out:

"Democrats who were attracted to the Republican line by its strong anti-Communist platform are certainly not going to continue their support of a party which seems to have made the persecution of Joe McCarthy one of its major campaigns. You can hardly blame them for returning to the Democratic fold under the circumstances." And then a warning: "I think President Eisenhower, Governor Dewey and other anti-McCarthy Republicans are going to be unpleasantly surprised when they learn the election tallies in certain sections next November." And Mr. Hearst stressed the divisions in the two parties and the inevitability of realignment.

There is no doubt that this newspaper publisher carefully considered his shift of position and reflected the standpoint of his larger readership in the big urban areas.

Another straw in the wind — noticed particularly in Washington. Senator Pat McCarran, lifelong Democrat, went to the strongly GOP state of New Hampshire on May 1 and, in a speech to veterans, strongly praised Styles Bridges, Republican and senior Senator from New Hampshire who is, besides, the president pro tempore of the U. S. Senate. Bridges is up for re-election next fall. Friends of McCarran say the Nevada Senator's speech in New Hampshire was in part an attempt to lay the basis for later open realignment of conservative Democrats and Republicans.

Finally, over last weekend, conservatives of both parties met in Chicago with Col. Robert R. McCormick, Republican publisher of the Chicago *Tribune* as host, and started a new organization called "For America." Dean Clarence Manion (Democrat), John T. Flynn (Republican), Howard Buffett (Republican), former Senator Burton K. Wheeler (Democrat), former Representative Hamilton Fish (Republican) were named to head its organizing board. The birth of the organization was attended by expressed intentions to forge a "conservative ADA" and create a realignment of parties.

After Dien Bien Phu: It is learned that during the whole Indo-China crisis, the President has been in constant touch with General George C. Marshall, former Chief of Staff, Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. Since Marshall "made Eisenhower" originally in the Army and promoted him to command the forces in Europe in World War II, it is concluded that Ike naturally has relied on Marshall's advice in this situation today.

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This assumes some significance in view of the story originally published in HUMAN EVENTS that President Truman (a great admirer of Marshall) conferred with that General during the 24 hours preceding the historic Blair House conference in June, 1950 at which Truman gave the order to "get going" in Korea. Truman had just secretly made a quick auto trip from Washington to Leesburg, Va. (just thirty miles away from the Capital) where Marshall has his residence. It is believed that Truman received from Marshall the fatal advice to land forces in Korea. Recollection of this story (which has never been convincingly denied) chills, rather than encourages, military men here who are worried about our participation in a ground force intervention in Indo-China.

The decision to intervene need not be taken for some time, since the approaching monsoon season may save the French from immediate ejection from the country. However, military observers here fear that the type of military thinking and planning, which Marshall has shown in the past—"bayonet fighting" and ground warfare — will displace the air power and "massive retaliation" strategy of which Secretary Dulles has talked so much, and then — it is feared — we will be in for "another Korea."

Not Merely Gossip: Scarcely a day passes but Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary of the UN, doesn't make the second if not the first page and seems regarded as approvingly as if he were the President of the N. Y. Stock Exchange. Yet, some well-informed Swedes (Dag is from that country) here the other day expressed surprise at the American reception of their countryman. They report he stands in much lower esteem in Sweden and is deemed an extreme left-winger in politics.

● A visitor from Texas the other day gave us an account of a lecture held in his state, in El Paso. What impressed him was that mention of the *New York Times* brought boos and hisses — no cheers. A sign of the times.

● Even the most fervent anti-Communists here who want a bill to legalize wire-tapping for security reasons agree with the Democrats who would require the Attorney General to obtain a court order before tapping the wire, in certain circumstances. In other words, a limited power only would be granted. This is symptomatic of a developing attitude, not toward the beloved and trusted J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI, but toward Attorney General Brownell. The latter is regarded as having fumbled the exposure of Harry Dexter White last fall (Ike shared in this bungling) and was only saved from public reaction by the intervention of J. Edgar Hoover. Also, Brownell is believed to be trying to eliminate Congressional probes of Reds, preferring that his own security division do all this kind of investigation. It is never forgotten that Brownell politically hails from New York and may still be merely a henchman for Governor Dewey. The Dewey crowd, generally, is thought to be all too sensitive to pressure from the large left-wing segment of New York's population — almost as much so as any Democratic Administration.

● Our contributor who wrote the piece "Right Wing Papers Need Right Wing Writers" (March 17, 1954) missed a good item for his case. We hear that the reputedly conservative Washington *Evening Star*, largest paper in this area, buys the syndicated column of the conservative Raymond Moley which is run in about a hundred papers in the country. Although it pays good money for this Moley output the *Star* never runs the column. Yet, in the paper there regularly appear three New Deal columnists — Thomas Stokes, Doris Fleeson and Lowell Mellett. The only general columnist of a conservative complexion the *Star* runs five days a week is David Lawrence. The score is 3 to 1, for the Left.

More White House Sabotage: Two years ago a House committee under the chairmanship of Eugene Cox of Georgia started looking into foundations to ascertain if their tax free funds were being used to promote left wing causes — or worse. Congressman Cox died during the probe and thereafter Congressman Carroll Reece, a member of the Cox Committee, told the House that the investigation had in effect been sabotaged and sponsored another resolution authorizing a new investigation by a committee under his chairmanship.

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This week the Reece Committee opened its doors for public hearings but it is uncertain how much of a job it will be able to do. The Committee became unpopular at the White House from its birth — and already the funds expected for the investigation have been drastically cut. The Cox Committee was criticized because only a few foundations were investigated and particularly because the huge Ford Foundation was ignored. Research Director Norman Dodd estimates that there are from 6,000 to 7,000 foundations with aggregate resources of around $7,500,000,000. It is estimated that the Ford Foundation alone has resources of some $500,000,000 and an annual income approaching $30,000,000 a year.

The cut in the Committee's funds may make it impossible for any effective probe of foundations. Observers are pointing to the Reece Committee as just another example of an inexplicable and tragic hostility of the White House toward efforts of Congress to cope with the Communist menace.

Allies?: The obvious reluctance of both England and France to enter into any military alliance for the protection of Indo-China has focused attention on their actual commitments to the Soviet Union. The fact is that both of these nations have agreements with the Russians to (1) furnish all possible economic assistance to the Soviets and (2) to refrain from entering into any alliance or coalition against Russia. England and France signed these treaties at the end of World War II — and the treaties were to last for 20 years.

That these treaties have never been repudiated and that they still have a number of years to run has puzzled Washington observers. In looking over the performance of England and France in the cold war against Russia the conclusion is that both have given the Soviets much economic assistance and have done very little to antagonize them. In the Korean war both gave the U.S. only token military assistance but traded vigorously with the enemy. Now they are insisting that everyone (including the U.S.) should trade as much as possible with Communist nations. England and France, by their failure to rearm adequately have insured that NATO would not become any real threat to the Kremlin, meanwhile taking gifts from the American taxpayer. Now the flat refusal of either England or France to resist Communism in southeast Asia has re-emphasized the 20 year treaties of these nations with Russia.

The conclusion is inescapable that England and France have been more diligent in carrying out the terms of their Russian agreements than they have been in trying to resist the Kremlin. A sharp reappraisal of our foreign spending is due.

Segregation: South Carolina, as we learned on a weekend visit, is far more interested in the anticipated decision of the U. S. Supreme Court on the issue of race segregation in the public schools than in the outcome of the Geneva Conference. It rivals the weather as a subject of conversation.

The general opinion is that the Supreme Court will decide against segregation, and then the state will proceed with its announced plan to drop public education. The legal machinery for such a move was set up at the last election. It is expected that the public school buildings will be leased out to private organizations. Some think the state will discontinue school taxes, others maintain that the state will subsidize privately owned and operated schools. In any case, a decision against segregation will inaugurate an important social experiment — the removal of education from political control. Other Southern states are expected to follow the lead of South Carolina.

On the other hand, there is a preponderance of Negro votes in some counties, although in the state as a whole the voting strength of the two races is about equal. With the Negroes more conscious of the social question, and therefore voting solidly, there is fear that non-segregated public schools may be established in the near future, at least on a local basis. The white folks who pay most of the taxes, say they will meet that issue when it comes up. But there seems to be a wide opinion among them that the public school system in South Carolina is doomed.

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In Defense of McCarthy: John T. Flynn's latest offering is called "McCarthy: His War on American Reds and the Story of Those who Oppose Him" — an eleven page pamphlet written in defense of the Wisconsin Senator. Flynn's finale is striking as he sums up the Cohn-Schine affair: "The *Daily Worker* and that strange collection of dailies which so often agree with it, have blown this incident up into some monstrous assault on the Army for which Senator McCarthy is being pilloried. The shocking aspect of this was that Secretary of the Army Stevens should lend himself to this disreputable operation to discredit Senator McCarthy.

"Imagine the population of America glued to their television and radio sets for days listening to the Secretary of the Army telling how McCarthy tried to get a commission for a patriotic young American as a second lieutenant. This was told on the witness stand by Secretary Stevens with all the gravity of a man uncovering some monstrous conspiracy. What has happened to our sense of humor? Contrast this 'crime' of McCarthy with the monstrous villainy McCarthy attacks — the betrayal of America by the Reds and their dupes in our government." (For copies, address America's Future, Inc., 210 E. 43 St., New York 17, N. Y. For information concerning Flynn's radio broadcasts, write Rudolf K. Scott, Executive Director, America's Future, Inc., 210 E 43 St., New York 17, N. Y.)

Book Front: *The Income Tax: Root of all Evil,* by Frank Chodorov. The Devin-Adair Co. 116 pages. $2.00. Reviewed by Wm. F. Buckley, Jr.

John T. Flynn is seized these days with a terrible pessimism because, he rightly observes, very few Americans know anything about the premises of a free society. What is more, they are not aware that our present society is as different from that in which our grandfathers lived as the Republic of 1781 was different from Colonial America.

A student at college today listens to and participates in spirited debates as to whether the federal minimum wage should be 75c or one dollar, whether federal social security should cover farmers and domestic servants, whether federal farm parity should be fixed at 75% or 100%. Nowhere in the bastions of Academic Freedom and Free Discussion does anyone hear a real live person rationally defend the notion that there should be *no* federal minimum wage, *no* federal social security, *no* federal farm parity programs. Such contentions have been placed outside the limits of tolerable opinion.

But along comes a cogent, calm, learned voice telling us that we miss the point altogether when we discuss whether the income tax should be limited to 90% or 25%; we shouldn't, says Frank Chodorov, have any income tax at all, period. He says this in his new book, *The Income Tax: Root of all Evil;* it is dedicated to Albert Jay Nock — by a man whose work and whose life license him to membership in what Nock called the Remnant. Assuming that the truth-seekers in our colleges, the broad-minded boys, so much as hear of Chodorov's book, their reaction is predictable; they will greet it much as they would a book that proposed that we eat our young.

"Reactionary" is the gentlest epithet that will be tossed at this book. And reactionary it surely is: Mr. Chodorov cheerfully admits that the idea of *not* having an income tax is not new with him. He then goes on to demonstrate that the 16th Amendment was a step away from the principles of the Declaration of Independence, a step back in the direction of state centralization and aloof government. Mr. Chodorov's ideas are not new. They are very, very old. Many of them have been propounded by the great philosophers of freedom, some of whom reached back into history to trace the effects of omnipotent government on individual freedom and morality, some of whom speculated upon the deterioration of future societies should they fall prey to the blandishments of centralization and egalitarianism.

Chodorov can be more convincing than Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, or William Graham Sumner because he is not saddled with the difficulties inherent in talking about social *tendencies.* He is no Orwell talking about what might or even what will happen. He is talking about the United States of 1954, and he shows what *has* happened to our freedoms, to our morality, to our ingenuity, and to our productivity — all, he insists, because along the way we forgot that it is the state which is the natural enemy of freedom and prosperity.

Let those who instinctively recoil from so categorical a statement as that the income tax is the root of all (political) evil ask themselves—how else could the state have got away with it? Chodorov's analysis of the revolution of 1913 and his empirical confirmation of the inexorable consequences of relinquishing to the state the key to individual freedom are both profound and exciting. We are shown the economic, political and social effects of burgeoning government. And we are shown the essential uselessness of most of the suggested palliatives. Only the repeal of the 16th Amendment (which Chodorov knows darn well neither he nor his grandchildren will live to see) can domesticate the state.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Chodorov's thesis would have been greeted merely as an eloquent — but routine — reaffirmation of the premises of a society schooled in the ways of freedom. Today it is as revolutionary as the philosophy of individualism, whose unfamiliarity to the present generation so haunts Mr. Flynn, and others.

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